

VZCZCXRO5524  
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK  
DE RUEHGB #3628/01 3051519  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 011519Z NOV 07  
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4162  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003628

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/31/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: FM SUMMONS DIPLOMATIC CORPS TO DISCUSS PKK CRISIS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Patricia A. Butenis for Reasons 1.4d/b

11. (C) SUMMARY. Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari told Baghdad's Diplomatic Corps that if dialogue did not de-escalate current tensions, there would be a "serious crisis" between Iraq and Turkey. In a private sidebar with the Charge d'Affaires before the meeting, Zebari said that Prime Minister Maliki would not attend the Istanbul ministerial, citing the poor treatment the GOI's delegation received in Ankara as "a factor" in the decision. Zebari added that one of the deputy FMs would attend the Oct. 31 Arab League meeting in Cairo to discuss the Turkey-Iraq situation, adding that the GOI still plans to approach the Europeans about the situation, but at the ambassadorial level. END SUMMARY.

ZEBARI/BUTENIS SIDEBAR  
-----

12. (C) In a private meeting before an October 30 briefing for the diplomatic corps, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari told the Charge that PM Maliki would "definitely not" attend the Istanbul ministerial and said the poor treatment the GOI's delegation received in Ankara was "a factor" in the decision. Charge reminded Zebari how much was riding on the ministerial and explained that the Prime Minister's absence--and by extension the PKK issue--would then become the focus of discussion, with "disastrous" consequences to the conference. She emphasized that in the face of the Turkish slight, the Prime Minister had to demonstrate superior statesmanship and assured Zebari that the USG was weighing in with Ankara to ensure the Iraqi delegation received all due courtesy and assistance in Istanbul. 3.

(C) Zebari then confirmed that one of his deputy Foreign Ministers (he did not specify which one) would attend the October 31 Arab League PermRep meeting in Cairo. Zebari also told the Charge that although he had made all the preparations, his Brussels trip was off but that the GOI still planned to engage the EU in Brussels at the ambassadorial level. While repeating that the GOI considers the PKK a terrorist organization and wants to cooperate with Turkey on the issue, Zebari cautioned that if there is no "de-escalation" of the current tension through diplomatic means, the GOI would approach the Europeans at the ministerial level. Zebari also volunteered that representatives from the MFA had been in contact with Turkish diplomats at the Turkish National Day celebration on October 129. (NOTE: At that event, the Turkish Ambassador told the Charge that there was no ongoing communication between his embassy and the GOI on the crisis. END NOTE)

CHIEF OF MISSION MEETINGS  
-----

14. (C) During the briefing, which he conducted in English, Zebari laid out the now-familiar GOI PKK line for the approximately 20 Chiefs of Mission in attendance. The PKK, he said, is a terrorist organization; its presence in Iraq is

illegal; and the GOT has "legitimate concerns" about PKK activities. Sending the MOD-led Ankara delegation, he continued, should have signaled to the Turks how seriously the GOI was taking the matter. The delegation, he stressed, had brought concrete proposals--establishing border checkpoints, a Joint Security Commission to monitor PKK activities, and an offer to close down PKK "front" offices in Iraq--to discuss with the Turks. Zebari described the Turkish reaction as "not positive," explaining that the Turks thought the measures would "take some time to implement." He added that the GOI delegation had also conveyed a clear message that a cross border operation was "unacceptable." Zebari maintained (not quite convincingly) that he was "looking forward to Istanbul" and that the MFA was in touch with Turkish counterparts to keep the conference focused on Iraq. But he warned that if diplomatic efforts did not produce results, a "serious crisis" appeared inevitable. He closed by emphasizing that the GOI neither needed "another point of conflict" nor wanted its relations with Turkey "poisoned," but admitted the GOI's "confidence was shaken" by these recent events.

#### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

15. (C) The Charge underscored that both nations were U.S. allies and that the USG appreciated the GOI's decision to send a delegation to Ankara. She praised the restraint the Turks have shown until this point and urged the GOI to take "concrete steps" against the PKK to ratchet down the tension.

French Ambassador Girault asked Zebari if the Turkish General Staff had snubbed the Ankara delegation. Zebari replied that the delegation included representatives from the Iraqi ministries of Interior and Defense and that they had met with their Turkish ministry counterparts and did not have

BAGHDAD 00003628 002 OF 002

meetings scheduled with the Turkish General Staff. German Ambassador Schumacher inquired about "known" PKK offices in Iraq and Zebari said that although the PKK had bases in the Qandil Mountains, the GOI was "not aware of PKK offices in cities or populated areas." (NOTE: None of the Ambassadors pressed Zebari on this apparent contradiction with the GOI's offer to the Turks to close down PKK offices in Iraq. END NOTE) Polish Charge d'Affaires Waldemar Figaj wanted to know if Iraqi border checkpoints were manned by IA or Peshmerga elements. Zebari responded that the Peshmerga on the border were "Iraqi Army. Iraqis, definitely." The Polish Charge also suggested the GOI explore joint IA/TA staffing for border checkpoints. Zebari welcomed the idea saying the GOI was "open to creative solutions." Zebari added that in Ankara the Turks had not indicated what kind of action they expected from the GOI. To a question about the use of United States troops along the border, Zebari pointed out that MNF-I had offered to provide the two sides aerial surveillance intelligence, but not troops. Zebari closed by saying the crisis required joint, not unilateral, action and described the PKK situation as "essentially a Turkish problem" into which the GOI did not wish to be drawn.

BUTENIS